



Youth being served at Tiger Classic Tournament

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Many of the greats in tennis history began to learn the game at an early age, developing their skills in various outlets that enabled them to establish themselves as the legends they eventually became.

This weekend's Tiger Classic hosted by Leskera Law Firm and Scott Credit Union youth tennis tournament at the Edwardsville High tennis complex has youngsters of many ages competing; there's a division for players 12 and under. Three of those area competitors talked about what brought them to the game in interviews at the tournament Saturday afternoon.

Edwardsville's Alex Wilson, who's aged 11, is one of those players taking part in the tournament. “I've been playing tennis since I was four,” Wilson said. “My mom used to play,” which led to Wilson being introduced to the game. “I like every tennis player,” he said when asked who his favorite player was.

“I play soccer (as well),” Wilson said; his favorite player is Eden Hazard of Chelsea in the English Premier League.

“I really just like playing it,” Wilson said when asked what enjoys most about tennis. “It's fun to play tennis; I just want to be a good tennis player and play in high school.”





Edwardsville's Colton Hulme, 11, came to tennis when he was in Florida with his mom and they were playing. "I was 5 years old," Hulme said of the trip that introduced him to the game. "I had no idea how to play, so we were playing whoever gets the point, wins.

"I like everything" about the game, Hulme said. "I hope to play in high school one day; I play basketball and baseball too."

Hulme, who will be at Lincoln Middle School in the fall, likes Swiss players Stan Wawrinka and Roger Federer, Serbian star Novak Djokovic and Spanish great Rafael Nadal; Hulme tries to model his game after them. “I try to copy what they





do,” Hulme said. “I’m good at how I play.”

Glen Carbon's Brighton McDaniel, who attends Lincoln Middle School, has played the game for he past nine years and, like Hulme and Wilson, is playing in the 12-year-old division in the tournament. “I just thought it would be fun, so I just tried it out,” McDaniel said when asked about what brought her to the game. “I turned out to love it; you can do different things with the ball and have different motions and do different things.”

McDaniel also plays volleyball and field hockey. When asked what she hopes to accomplish in tennis, McDaniel said “just to get better and show other people, like from across the (Mississippi) river that I am good. I’ve had a lot of fun playing tennis.”

There are aspects of volleyball that can translate well to the tennis court and vice versa.

“A serve in volleyball is like the same motion (like in tennis); it just helps more,” McDaniel, who is playing in her first tournament since recovering from a broken foot, said.